

Message Text

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12
ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL MILAN
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SUBJECT: CABLE FROM COMO

REF MILAN 1631, MILAN 1588, MILAN 1589, ROME 12713

1. COMO, IS IN GOOD ECONOMIC SHAPE AND LESS SHAKEN BY THE JUNE 15
ELECTIONS THAN OTHER AREAS IN THIS CONSULAR DISTRICT.

2. AN ANCIENT TEXTILE AND TRADE CENTER, COMO IS ONLY AN HOUR NORTH
BUT FAR REMOVED IN POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE FROM MILAN. ITS RICH ECONOMY
DRAWS THREE QUARTERS OF ITS INCOME FROM INDUSTRY AND ALMOST A FIFTH
FROM TOURISM AND SERVICES. THE COMASCHI CONSIDER THEMSELVES THE
SOUTHERNMOST SWISS CANTON - AND THEIR INDUSTRY AND ATTITUDES EXPLAIN
THE CLAIM.

3. ELECTION LOSSES BY THE DC WERE MARGINAL IN THE CITY RUN BY AN
IMPRESSIVE, WIREY VERY HIGHLY REGARDED YOUNG CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT.
BUT IN THE PROVINCE IT TOOK LARGER LOSSES WHILE THE PCI MADE THE MAJOR

GAINS. EVEN IN THE CITY, THE PCI AND THE PSI EACH ROSE BY ABOUT 50
PERCENT. THE FORMER CITY EXECUTIVE WAS RUN BY THE DC, PSDI AND REP-
UBLICANS BUT IN THE NEW EXECUTIVE THE SOCIALISTS HAVE REPLACED THE
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REPUBLICANS.

4. WHILE LOCAL DC LEADERS ARE FAIRLY CONFIDENT OF THEIR OWN SITUATION AND PERFORMANCE, THEY ARE HIGHLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN WHICH THEY FORESEE MAJOR COMMUNIST GAINS AND DC LOSSES. THEY ARE CANDID IN ATTRIBUTING LOSSES TO POOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP, OLD FACES, THE LOSS OF ANCILLARY ORGANIZATIONS LIKE ALCI AND CISL INEFFECTIVE AND DISHONEST GOVERNMENT. LIKE THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY, THEY HAVE A PAINED DISDAIN FOR ITALY SOUTH OF THE ALPS.

5. INDUSTRY IN THE CITY OF COMO IS MAINLY TEXTILES, PRIMARILY SILK, AND IT IS BOOMING. IT REMAINS THE LAST GREAT EUROPEAN SILK CENTER HAVING REPLACED LYONS WHICH, LOCAL SILKMEN CLAIM, FAILED TO ADAPT TO MODERN INDUSTRIALIZATION. WITH MILLS RUNNING TWO AND THREE SHIFTS AND IN SOME CASES DOUBLING CAPACITY, NO ONE IN THE SILK SECTOR APPEARS TO BE SUFFERING FROM ANYTHING BUT OVERWEIGHT. SURPRISINGLY, THE ARTIFICIAL

FIBERS SECTOR IS ALSO DOING EXCEEDINGLY WELL AS IS THE IMPORTANT FURNITURE INDUSTRY AND TOURISM.

6. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME SMALL PLANT CLOSURES AND, OF COURSE, THE RANCO CLOSING WHICH IS A MAJOR ISSUE. ABSORBING ITS NEARLY 800 EMPLOYEES WOULD NOT BE EASY. BUT NEITHER DOES IT CONSTITUTE A REALLY SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THE ENTIRE PROVINCE ALTHOUGH IT IS POLITICAL GRIST FOR THE COMMUNISTS AND THE EXTREME LEFT.

7. TALKING WITH SOCIALIST LEADERS AS WELL AS WITH THE DC AND THE INDUSTRIALISTS ORGANIZATION, THE US CAME UNDER VERY HEAVY FIRE FOR THE EVILS OF MULTI-NATIONALS. COMO TRADE UNIONS AND THE PSI HAD JUST HELD A CONFERENCE IN THE OCCUPIED RANCO PLANT ON THEIR MISDEEDS WHICH DID LITTLE TO IMPROVE OUR LOCAL IMAGE AND MUCH TO WHIP UP HOSTILITY TO PREDATORY ABSENTEE CAPITALISM. ALTHOUGH THERE IS A READY AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO THE US POINT OF VIEW, OUR LOCAL USIS RESOURCES ARE TOO THIN TO REACH THIS IMPORTANT PUBLIC.

8. TWO AREAS OF CONTRACTION DESERVE SPECIAL NOTICE. SOME THOUSANDS OF WORKERS FROM THE PROVINCE COMMUTE DAILY TO SWITZERLAND. THE NUMBER

HAS DECLINED DURING THE LAST YEAR AS THE SWISS ECONOMY HAS SLOWED. AT THE SAME TIME A MAJOR FRONTIER INDUSTRY HAS BEEN IN DEEP TROUBLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOR THE PAST YEAR OR TWO AS RISING SWISS PRICES HAVE MADE SMUGGLING FROM SWITZERLAND UNPROFITABLE. THIS HAS NOT ONLY HURT THE MOUNTAIN ECONOMY BUT APPARENTLY TURNED HONEST SMUGGLERS INTO INEPT KIDNAPPERS WHO HAVE GIVEN KIDNAPPING AN ESPECIALLY BAD NAME BY KILLING A NUMBER OF THEIR VICTIMS.

9. STILL AS IN EARLIER VISITS, THE OBSERVER COMES AWAY WITH AN IMPRESSION OF AN EXTRAORDINARILY ENERGETIC, WELL RUN, PROSPEROUS

AREA REASONABLY ABLE TO SOLVE ITS OWN PROBLEMS BUT LARGELY HELPLESS
TO COPE WITH THE POWERFUL PRESSURES UPON IT GENERATED ELSEWHERE IN
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